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Delivered from Soviet
Embassy 6⁰⁵ pm, Tues,
9/14/76

EMBASSY OF THE
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

September 14
1976.

Dear Brent,

Enclosed you
will find the text of
our Embassy's press-
release, which is
being published here
and in Tokyo on
instructions from
Moscow.

Sincerely
Nuli.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

1706 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20009

WHO NEEDS IT?

Moscow. September 14. All kinds of issues can arise, some totally unforeseen in the relations between states, especially neighboring states. If the states involved in such an issue set real store by their relations, they go about the issue in a calm manner trying not to damage the interests of any of the sides. An unforeseen concatenation of events brought about just that kind of issue in Soviet-Japanese relations a few days ago.

On September 6 routine training flights were going on at a Far Eastern Soviet airfield. A plane piloted by airman V. I. Belenko lost its bearings. It found itself close to Japanese territory and, with not enough fuel for a return flight, made an emergency landing at the airport in the Japanese town of Hakodate.

The first duty of the Japanese authorities would seem to have been to make it possible for the Soviet airman to contact Soviet offices in Japan: the USSR Embassy in Tokyo and the USSR General Consulate in Sapporo, just 150 kilometers away from Hakodate.

The Japanese authorities acted otherwise. They put the Soviet airman in strict isolation, which gives grounds for believing that various methods were used to influence him. Millions of Japanese TV viewers saw the airman, with a sack pulled over his head, being moved from Hakodate to Tokyo, dragged by police, pushed by them into a car and having his head pressed against the seat.

Despite the persistent appeals of the Soviet side, the Japanese authorities refused to allow them to meet Belenko for almost four days, thus grossly violating the provisions of the Soviet-Japanese consular convention, articles 31-32, which envisage that a detained citizen of another state should have an immediate meeting arranged with that state's representatives.

It is notable that third states have interfered in the affair with the connivance of Japanese authorities. On the day following the landing of the Soviet plane in Japan, an official White House spokesman said that President Ford had decided to grant asylum to the Soviet airman. The White House spokesman had to admit that the American authorities did not even know whether the airman had asked for an asylum in the USA.

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This statement can only be described as instigative. Even the sensation-prone American press and television described it as "unusual" for the White House and apparently prompted by electoral considerations. American secret agencies were clearly behind the "invitation" to the Soviet airman. Subsequent developments demonstrated that they had a hand in bringing V. I. Belenko to the USA.

On September 9 this year the Soviet Government made a statement to the Japanese Government in which the acts of the Japanese authorities were qualified as openly unfriendly toward the Soviet Union. The note stressed that the strengthening of good-neighborly relations between the USSR and Japan can be secured on condition that a firm rebuff is given to attempts of third countries to interfere in Soviet-Japanese relations. One would hope, said the note, that the Japanese Government would not act on promptings from outside to please external forces of one kind or another.

The Soviet side again demanded an immediate return of the airman and the plane. By the same token hope was expressed that the Japanese Government would take a carefully weighted stand and make a decision that meets the spirit of relations shaping up between our countries, and that any other decision could not but affect Soviet-Japanese relations.

However the Japanese Government has failed to show such an approach and has to date failed to reply to the statement of September 9. As the events that followed have shown, it has used this time to take the Soviet airman to the United States.

Despite persistent demands from the Soviet side, the Japanese authorities avoided satisfying the request for a meeting of Soviet representatives with the airman for several days. When the meeting finally did take place it was turned into a farce. Airman V. I. Belenko sat like a dummy 25-30 meters away from the representative of the Soviet Embassy in Japan, separated from him by a barricade of desks. He was surrounded by policemen and Japanese officials. The Soviet doctor who could have made a professional judgement as to the physical condition of the airman was barred from the meeting. Officials of the Japanese foreign ministry who were present in the room rudely interfered in the conversation and interrupted it.

This was not the kind of meeting that would have made it possible to talk with V. I. Belenko. The two or three incoherent phrases he uttered did not bear out the claims of the Japanese officials that the airman intended to seek political asylum in the United States. The whole course of the meeting, which lasted barely seven minutes, including the time it took to interpret the phrases into Japanese, showed that V. I. Belenko was not in a normal state and was under the influence of narcotics or some other effect. Immediately after the meeting he was put into a plane of an American airline and sent to the USA under guard. This was how the Japanese authorities in cooperation with American special agencies treated the Soviet airman.

Japanese officials declare that they would like the affair involving the landing of the Soviet plane in Japan to be settled without detriment to

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Soviet-Japanese relations. Facts, however, prove otherwise. The plane has not as yet been returned to its owner, the Soviet Union. The acts of the Japanese authorities with regard to the Soviet plane and its pilot could not be qualified as being other than unfriendly to the Soviet Union, flouting elementary norms of international law and the practice of relations between states, especially neighboring states. In acting in this way Japan aggravates Soviet-Japanese relations, their present and future.

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